

Dashboard Deep Dive: Understanding the Power and Purpose of Public Dashboards

Webinar Overview and Q&A

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Overview of Business Intelligence Tools:

- **GOAL:** Understand what dashboards are, where to create or access them, the types of data they display, and why they are useful for data exploration.
- Dashboards are business intelligence tools to present meaningful data in consumable, accessible, and customizable ways.
- Dashboards are used across many sectors, with numerous platforms available for creating these interactive tools.
- Data housed in a dashboard can come from various sources. Always review any accompanying materials on data definitions, limitations, and sources.
- Four reasons to use a dashboard: 1) accessibility, 2) transparency, 3) interactivity, and 4) customizability.

Dashboard Use:

- Learn about common metrics, visualizations, features, and considerations to maximize your dashboard use.
- With a dashboard, you can display data, compare and link different sources, track trends, tell a story, answer questions, and inform decision-making.
- Data are displayed in common and unique visualization types that may vary by the platform used, such as pie charts, maps, and tables.
- Using Microsoft Power BI, common features to be aware of to enhance dashboard use include filters, tooltips, and drill down options.
- Take note of sources and limitations to determine quality of the data.

GOCPP Use Cases:

- At the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, dashboards have been used for several years to improve internal and external operations.
- Key use cases include replacing legislative reports, informing funding decisions, and keeping the public informed on public safety trends.
- A full listing of public data dashboards is available at: <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/data-dashboards/>

Webinar Q&A

Q1: This is such great information and a nice, easy visual representation of data. I think where folks get stalled is how to build these - it's intimidating, and agencies have questions and concerns of the physical capabilities in their existing technology.

A: Depending on which BI tool you use, there are various online instructional videos and resources available to get you started. See some links below.

Justice Information Resource Network Power BI Training Sessions ([click here](#))

Power BI Tutorial from Beginner to Pro - Desktop to Dashboard in 60 Minutes ([click here](#))

Microsoft Power BI for Beginners - 2 Hour BI Crash Course ([click here](#))

Hands On Power BI Tutorial - Beginner to Pro Full Course ([click here](#))

Q2: Have you defined recidivism at GOCPP?

A: Recidivism data is tracked by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. For their report: ([click here](#)). When we do recidivism studies we always try to track re-arrests, re-convictions, and re-sentences to incarceration.

Webinar Q&A

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for additional training for creating dashboards?

A: See sources provided in response to Q1.

Q4: Can you talk more about why GOCPP created the dashboards (impetus) and how you have seen non-researchers / advocates use them?

A: GOCPP created these dashboards as a way to translate vast and sometimes complex data into easily digestible findings for policymakers and the general public. They were also used to replace our laborious 20 and 30 page legislative data reports. This process has been well received by the legislature and the general public. We do not have any specific use cases from the public but are interested in setting up an online survey or poll for our dashboards where people can share feedback including what they used each dashboard for.

Q5: It would be really helpful to be able to overlay Medicaid/DBH data--how much contact people convicted of certain crimes have with DBH, intensity of interventions, whether their prescriptions and other treatment match their diagnoses, are they refilling prescriptions at prescribed rate?

A: It would be very challenging for our agency to produce a dashboard with this information as it is HIPAA protected and we do not have access to it.

Webinar Q&A

Q6: In the midwest here: Is BING maps being taken away on your end in power BI as well?

A: Yes, we have also seen Bing maps going away in November. We currently use Bing maps on two of our dashboards, one soon to be public-facing. We are still investigating alternatives to Bing that will work following the change in November, but we primarily use the shape maps. Shape maps are based on boundaries of a location, such as counties, states, countries, zip codes, census tracts, etc. and can be colored with a gradient or legend based on a selected variable. They do not support the use of precise locations (address, coordinates).

Q7: One of my hesitations with dashboards in general is that I cannot necessarily trust that the data set behind the dash is accurate and sufficient for the task. (Caveat: I totally trust GOCPP when it comes to data integrity).

A: This is a sentiment that we agree with. A dashboard is only as good as the data going into it and if that data can be easily understood and not misinterpreted. This is why it is important to include data definitions and limitations into your dashboard when possible.



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